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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION; ANTONINI WILSON; CHAVEZ MEDIATION BETWEEN
URIBE AND THE FARC; CHILE; 08/31/07

1. SUMMARY STATEMENT

Today's most important international stories are related to the Argentine Government's expectations regarding a request to the US for Antonini Wilson's extradition; Venezuelan President Chavez's attempt to mediate between the Colombian Government and the FARC; and the allegedly "vague" reasons for Chile's latest protest against President Bachelet's economic policies.

2. OPINION PIECES AND EDITORIALS

- "The (Argentine) Government does not believe the US will extradite Antonini Wilson"

Mariano Obarrio, political columnist of daily-of-record "La Nacisn's," writes (08/31) "The Kirchner administration is convinced that Guido Alejandro Antonini Wilson, who has just been found in Miami, will not be extradited to Argentina whether in the short term or at any time in the future.

"... A high-ranking official from the Argentine Government told 'La Nacisn': '(Antonini Wilson) is a US citizen and an intermediary between PDVSA and the US economic top brass, and, in any event, he is being closely watched by US security agencies.'

"... This is why the Argentine Government does not expect Judge Novatti's request for (Antonini Wilson's) extradition to be successful.

"... According to US sources, the FBI will not make any comments on Antonini, and the USG limited itself to inform on the formal steps required for the request for extradition...

"Wladimir Abad, a businessman with ties to Antonini Wilson, pointed out yesterday that Antonini Wilson has ties to Chavez and (that he) handles business with the Venezuelan government and with PDVSA.

"This is what the (Argentine) Government believes US authorities are interested that Antonini cooperate to investigate other businessmen from the so-called 'Bolivarian bourgeoisie', the businessmen related to the Bolivarian government."

- "Chavez arrives today in Bogot to mediate between the Uribe administration and the FARC"

Pablo Biffi, on special assignment to Bogot for leading "Clarn," writes (08/31) "Playing a risky role of 'mediator' between the Uribe administration and the FARC, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez will arrive today in Bogot in an attempt to reach a deal allowing for the exchange of some 40 politicians and military that are being held by insurgents in return for some 400 imprisoned guerrilla leaders.

The Bolivarian leader's initiative has set off a wave of optimism among the hostages' relatives...

"... In any case, FARC also told 'Clarn' that they welcomed the Venezuelan President's initiative, although they asked him to use his influence to convince Uribe about the need for a military withdrawal in Colombia, which the Colombian government has bluntly rejected...

"Ties between Colombia and Venezuela, which have always been difficult, are now in good shape and both presidents have been pragmatic enough not to jeopardize the increasing trade between their two countries in spite of their diverging ideological positions.

"This time, Chavez seems to be comfortable playing a leading role, although the rigid positions of both the government and FARC will hinder his endeavor...

"No one knows what card the Venezuelan President may have up his sleeve, especially when the Colombian government and FARC have already put limits on him. A success could help Chavez repair his impaired international image, although a failure could place him in an awkward position.

"Diplomatic and political sources in Bogot have told 'Clarn' that Chavez could be planning to suggest both government and guerrillas accept another location for the exchange, without military or guerrilla intervention, which could be 'monitored' by international observers and the Red Cross, for example. This seems an intermediate option...

"... In the event both government and guerrillas agree to hold talks, another obstacle Chavez will meet will be the FARC's demand that two guerrillas imprisoned in the US be part of the exchange. In this case, Washington could play a key role, although it is still

unknown to what point the US is willing to release two guerrillas in exchange for three Americans held by the FARC since 2003.

"Additionally, what the FARC is willing to do to prevent a failure of Chavez (whom they consider a revolutionary leader) still remains to be seen."

- "Chile -unclear reasons for demonstrations"

Daily-of-record "La Nacisn" editorializes (08/31) "After the biggest protests in 17 years staged against the Chilean "Concertacion" government, President Michelle Bachelet and business chambers wonder what the real reason was for the Central Unitaria de Trabajadores (CUT) (trade union)'s call for a protest demonstration, independent of their nebulous disagreement with the very inappropriately named neo-liberal policies...

"During a business dinner, Bachelet admitted that 'fairer salaries' are badly needed, although she disapproved of the violent methodology as a way to obtain them...

"... In Chile, just like in most (Latin American) countries, there are minorities who hope that the (economic) model is derailed. In the demonstration the day before yesterday, some politicians identified with the left attempted to gain ground ...

"Regardless of the structural problem (unequal income distribution), which will not be solved with circumstantial measures such as salary increases, the Chilean economy is in good shape. During the first half of the year, its GDP increased at a sustained six-percent pace...

"... Hence Bachelet's justified suspicion about the real reasons for the demonstrations..."

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